

US Government Releases Latest Digital Divide Report

<http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/content/stories/index.cfm?key=210>

February 7, 2002

The US Department of Commerce has released its long-anticipated digital divide report, [A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet](#). The report can be downloaded in three formats: [html](#), [pdf](#) and [Microsoft Word](#).

For the convenience of DDN readers, the following is a copy of the report's executive summary:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Few technologies have spread as quickly, or become so widely used, as computers and the Internet. These information technologies are rapidly becoming common fixtures of modern social and economic life, opening opportunities and new avenues for many Americans. [A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet](#) shows the rapidly growing use of new information technologies across all demographic groups and geographic regions. Not only are many more Americans using the Internet and computers at home, they are also using them at work, school, and other locations for an expanding variety of purposes. In the last few years, Americans' use of the Internet and computers has grown substantially.

The rate of growth of Internet use in the United States is currently two million new Internet users per month.

More than half of the nation is now online. In September 2001, 143 million Americans (about 54 percent of the population) were using the Internet - an increase of 26 million in thirteen months. In September 2001, 174 million people (or 66 percent of the population) in the United States used computers.

Children and teenagers use computers and the Internet more than any other age group.

Ninety percent of children between the ages of 5 and 17 (or 48 million) now use computers.

Seventy-five percent of 14-17 year olds and 65 percent of 10-13 year olds use the Internet.

Households with children under the age of 18 are more likely to access the Internet (62 percent) than households with no children (53 percent).

Computers at schools substantially narrow the gap in computer usage rates for children from high and low income families.

Internet use is increasing for people regardless of income, education, age, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Between December 1998 and September 2001, Internet use by individuals in the lowest-income households (those earning less than \$15,000 per year) increased at a 25 percent annual growth rate. Internet use among individuals in the highest-income households (those earning \$75,000

per year or more) increased from a higher base but at a much slower 11 percent annual growth rate.

Between August 2000 and September 2001, Internet use among Blacks and Hispanics increased at annual rates of 33 and 30 percent, respectively. Whites and Asian American/Pacific Islanders experienced annual growth rates of approximately 20 percent during these same periods.

Over the 1998 to 2001 period, growth in Internet use among people living in rural households has been at an average annual rate of 24 percent, and the percentage of Internet users in rural areas (53 percent) is now almost even with the national average (54 percent).

The highest growth rate among different types of households is for single mothers with children (29 percent).

People with mental or physical disabilities (such as blindness, deafness, or difficulty walking, typing, or leaving home) are less likely than those without such disabilities to use computers or the Internet.

While 80 percent of Americans access the Internet through dial-up service, residential use of broadband service is rapidly expanding.

Between August 2000 and September 2001, residential use of high-speed, broadband service doubled—from about 4 to 11 percent of all individuals, and from 11 to 20 percent of Internet users.

Americans are going online to conduct an expanding range of activities.

Forty-five percent of the population now uses e-mail, up from 35 percent in 2000. Approximately one-third of Americans use the Internet to search for product and service information (36 percent, up from 26 percent in 2000).

Among Internet users, 39 percent of individuals are making online purchases and 35 percent of individuals are searching for health information.

Use of the Internet and computers at work has contributed to higher use levels at home.

Approximately 24 million of the 65 million employed adults who use a computer at their job also work on a computer at home. Moreover, the presence in a household of someone who uses a computer at work makes it far more likely—by a margin of approximately 77 to 35 percent—that the household owns a computer or uses the Internet at home.

With more than half of all Americans using computers and the Internet, we are truly a nation online. At work, schools, and libraries, as well as at home, the Internet is being used by a greater number of Americans.